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THE TECHNIQUE OF BRIDGING GAPS IN THE ACTION OF GERMAN DRAMA SINCE GOTTSCHED

[Concluded]

8. *Reports Accompanied by Alarms*

Not infrequently reports are strengthened by some accompanying audible or visible manifestation, elsewhere than on the stage. If audible, the audience may, or may not, be permitted to hear. If visible, of course only the characters can see. In Gottsched's *Cato*, noises (groans) are heard twice by the audience as well as on the stage, according to the stage directions: (*Man höret einen Tumult drinnen*). At the first noises Porcius rushes into the next room. The others continue the conversation, *for the stage must never be left unoccupied*. Then Porcius comes back with the report that Cato has turned his dagger against himself. As he concludes, Cato staggers forth, having stabbed himself in secret, to die openly, on the stage, after a long exhortation to son and daughter.

Schlegel in his tragedies makes frequent use of "alarms" as additional testimony in support of narrative. In the *Trojanerinnen*,¹ Andromache, in the confusion of the storming of the city, has hidden Hector's son in a temple. Ulysses is determined to destroy the house of Troy root and branch, and in his search for this very youth finds the mother, Andromache, who denies any knowledge of her son's whereabouts, pretending fear that he is already dead. Ulysses shrewdly suspects that the boy is hidden in the sanctuary and sends his soldiers to raze the temple to the earth. As the work of destruction progresses he points to the falling walls, for all is visible from the stage. In rising anxiety Andromache watches until her courage weakens, and to save her son's life she confesses his hiding-place in the temple. The boy is then found, seized, and hurled headlong from the highest battlement. The scene of torture for the mother, of cold calculation on the part of Ulysses, is extremely effective.

¹ First written in 1737; repeatedly remodeled; first published in 1747. Cf. Eugen Wolff, *Elias Schlegel* (Kiel, 1892).

In *Dido*, a cry is heard¹ from the adjoining room, where Dido kills herself. The door opens and we see her lying in her blood. She dies upon the stage, after last words.

In *Herrmann*,² shouts indicate the approach of the victorious warriors³ and later when Herrmann appears⁴ he brings the weapons of Varus to substantiate his report of a complete victory.

In *Orest u. Pylades*,⁵ Eutrophe, the *confidante* of Iphigenie, enters and reports that a captain is coming with his men. Orest and Pylades, knowing that they are being hunted, leave their conversation with Iphigenie and attempt to escape at the moment when the voice of the high priest is heard at the rear. Then follows action back of the scene, punctuated by cries and comments of Iphigenie and Eutrophe, who remain upon the stage. Finally we learn from Iphigenie: "Ach sie sind übermannt!" and Eutrophe: "Schon führet man sie fort." Behind the stage the friends have struggled with the enemy, observed from the stage. The *struggle* is banished from the stage.

In Cronegk's *Codrus* (1758),⁶ Medon, the savior of Athens, reports the favorable outcome of the conflict in a long prosaic narrative, awkwardly introduced and very evidently betraying its epic nature. Concluding his report, Medon cites the happy omens in the heavens. The terrible storm that has raged in sympathy with the human struggle has passed, and the deity promises favor and blessing. At the word a peal of thunder sounds from the left, the favorable token from the gods in support of his statement and the report.

Jean Calas (1774) is for Weisse the greatest departure among all his dramatic works. Usually he is conservative, leaning toward the old Alexandrine models, using those types and that technique. Suddenly he attempts to dramatize an occurrence of the day and succeeds in putting the newspaper account so to speak into dialogue form.

A young friend of the family visits one evening at the home of Jean Calas, a respected merchant of Toulouse, and a Protestant, though living in a Roman Catholic city. At nine or ten in the evening the friend, Lavaisse, and one of the sons of Calas start off for the former's lodgings. Calas and his wife accompany them to the

¹ V, iv (1739-44).

² 1741.

³ V, ii.

⁴ V, iv.

⁵ II, iii (1745).

⁶ V, xii.

head of the stairs leading down to the street. Meanwhile another son, a gloomy, melancholy student, has hanged himself in a fit of despondency, in the lower hall. When the two young men descend the stairs after an exchange of greetings with Calas we have the following stage directions (*Ein Geschrei unten: sie horchen auf: Geschrei: man hört es*): "Das Gott erbarm! Mein Bruder! Weh! Weh! Hülfe!" Then Calas descends the stairs. Lavoisier soon comes up to quiet Frau Calas, and piece by piece we learn with her what has happened. All is told under great excitement, not as a narrative, but in exclamations. In answer to Frau Calas' question, Lavoisier says: "Nichts; Ihr Sohn—ah!" The mother faints. A physician is sent for; gradually we learn the details of the scene below. Calas appears again; he exclaims: "Mein Sohn wie beugst du mich!" He speaks of "dem Gericht melden"; of "meines Sohnes Schande," and the wife helps the report then by correctly surmising the suicide of her son. Caseing, a neighbor who has arrived, *hears a tumult in the street*, though we hear nothing.

This play makes use of an enormous amount of detail requiring many reports of action. Similar at least in this matter of mass of detail containing many reports is Goethe's *Götz*.

Here¹ we have a masterful and on the stage very effective scene made up entirely of a report. Selbitz is borne in wounded and lies braced against a tree. But he sends Faud to a vantage point whence he can follow with his eye the white plume of Götz, in his fight with the emperor's soldiers. The terse questions of Selbitz, his lively comment on the progress of the struggle which he sees so well through the eyes of Faud quite arouse the active interest of the reader or beholder. Thus, while none of the actual fighting is seen or heard by the audience, the whole thing takes place within sight and hearing of the stage, as we must conceive. By this means the author achieves a remarkable effect as of visible action.

In Bodmer's *Brutus*, Portia, as she anxiously waits and watches for the return of her husband, Brutus, from the assassination of Caesar, reports² what *she* sees: that the mob is collecting and becoming tumultuous. Soon the mob itself appears, only to cross the stage with half a dozen sentences.³

¹ III, xiii.

² V, v.

³ V, vi.

In Bodmer's *Pelopidas*, as in Weisse's *Befreyung von Theben*, the tyrant of Thebes is murdered before our eyes. Immediately afterward in each instance we hear the tumult in the next room, where the drunken revelers, guests of the tyrant, are being cut down: *Pelopidas*, III, iii (*Ein Geruf und Gelerme hinter der Skene wird gehört*). A report of the butchery then follows.

In Stephanie's *Deserteur aus Kindesliebe*, the scene¹ is the interior of a guard house, with guards and prisoners conversing in soldier fashion. It is characteristic of Weishard, the young ensign, who is on duty at the door, and who, the son of wealthy parents and supercilious, takes no part in the soldier's talk, that he first of all hears the sound of blows, and reports that Holbeck, against whom he has a grudge, must be running the gauntlet now. The report of his punishment is the first indication we have that the hero, Holbeck, has carried out his plan to desert, and allow himself to be captured at once, in order that the money paid for bringing in the deserter might be used to pay his father's debts. In this case Weishard hears but does not see the occasion of the "alarm."

Later in the same act² occurs the following:

Man hört Geschrey inwendig.

[CAPTAIN PLATT *inquires*.:] Was ist das?

WEISHARD: Sie rufen: der König! der König!

The king, from behind the scene, then proceeds to give a happy ending to the play, his action being reported later on the stage.

In *Emilia Galotti* Lessing makes frequent use of "alarms." Recall the situation³ where Marinelli first brings the prince to despair by his account of the failure of his plan to remove Appiani from Guastalla, and then, under false pretenses, secures from the prince *carte blanche* for a new intrigue even more daring. In addition, he receives the promise of exoneration from all blame for possible consequence. At the instant a *shot is heard* and Marinelli describes the deed at that moment being executed. Here the preparation for this report fills two pages, rising to a climax and passing in suspense to the next scene. Here also Marinelli stands at the window and *observes what is happening without*, mingling his own reflections with a run-

¹ III, i.

² III, vi.

³ III, i.

ning comment or report upon what is taking place. The assassin, Angelo, approaches, and adds the details of the report.¹

Odoardo,² after leading his wife and the Countess Orsina to the latter's carriage, paces up and down the arcade a few times to calm himself before going to the prince. Marinelli observes him from the window, and comments upon his state of mind: ". . . . Nein, er kehrt wieder um. . . . Ganz einig ist er mit sich noch nicht. Aber um ein Grosses ruhiger ist er oder scheint er. Für uns gleich viel!"

9. *False Reports*

Another detail worthy of notice is the use made of *false reports*, reported action which has not really taken place. For present purposes, reports of this kind readily fall into two classes: first, those accepted as true by the audience as well as by the characters of the play; and secondly, those which the audience knows to be false, although believed by the characters for a time. The second class would have to be excluded here. The first class may be considered as being a part of the bona fide action so far as the audience is concerned, up to the moment when the truth becomes known. The use of "false reports" to secure dramatic or other effects is common in the Alexandrine plays. Here and there the action of whole plays is based upon a misunderstanding or false information. And the solution of the problem comes in a letter perhaps, or with the arrival of a traveler from distant parts, or with the confession of one who knows.

In Weisse's *Matrone von Ephesus*,³ the whole action, such as it is, rests upon the fabrication of Dorias and Karion. Antiphila, the young widow, accompanied by her *confidante*, Dorias, sets herself down in the tomb of her beloved husband recently laid to rest, and vows to remain there till she dies of starvation or of grief. Soon hunger makes its call; and a dashing young officer, attracted to the tomb by the light of the mourners, loses his heart at once to the pretty widow. His duty for the night is to guard the body of a felon hanging upon the gallows near by. He is responsible for his charge with his life. Dorias, not wishing to die of hunger, willingly

¹ MARINELLI (*der wieder nach dem Fenster geht*): "Dort fährt der Wagen langsam nach der Stadt zurück. So langsam? Und in jedem Schlage ein Bedienter? Das sind Anzeigen, die mir nicht gefallen:—dass der Streich wohl nur halb gelungen ist. . . ."

² V, i.

³ 1744, a comedy of one act.

partakes of the officer's lunch. Antiphila still pretends a lack of interest in all things earthly, and threatens to use her dagger to hasten her own death if the soldier further disturbs her mourning. To cure her mistress of her hypocrisy, Dorias leaves the tomb for a moment, returning with the report that the body has been stolen from the gallows, at the same time giving Karion a sign. The latter goes out, and soon returns, vowing that the body is indeed stolen, that love for her has made him forgetful of all things, even of a soldier's duty, and that his life is forfeit unless someone demand him in marriage according to the old custom. Alarmed, the widow begins a line of reasoning which justifies a new matrimonial venture. Dorias' report, sustained and supplemented by Karion's report, furnishes the only foundation for action.

In Gebler's *Wittve*¹ the widow, Gräfin Holdenthal, has several suitors who are temporizing until the result be known of a suit which if successful would make the countess a very desirable "catch," and if unsuccessful would leave her nearly penniless. Here again the "action" depends upon the reports which come in from time to time concerning the progress of the trial. First comes the news that the decision has been reached. Then bad reports arrive, which we must consider true on the face of them. Even the uncle of the countess, the king's minister, has lost his position or resigned, removing all hope for his niece. The suitors make their apologies and take their leave, until finally the report comes, this time true, that the countess has won everything and that the uncle has been reinstated in power and influence. Thus the countess' eyes have been opened to discriminate among her ostensible admirers, and *Laster*, in this case avarice, receives its due reward in being cheated of its end. But the action takes all of its energy from the reports of the suit in progress.

The report which deceives the audience as well as characters in the drama may be used to work up a very dramatic situation. The scene in Krüger's *Vitichab* already described (III, v)² is preceded by a false report, and in itself contains a false report. Siegmar returns to the German camp from the battlefield and reports to the old queen mother very circumstantially the course of the battle; how Vitichab's life has been in danger, how Siegmar had retreated

¹ 1770.

² Cf. above p. 19.

in order to assist his prince, and how the whole German army had then fled. The effect upon the camp of this apparently reliable but really false report is an immediate outbreak of excitement, shame, and passion for revenge. The old queen, Adelheid, is spokesman. She is on the point of seizing arms herself and rushing with the other women to the aid of the men, when Gundomad arrives. His well-elaborated report has been described above: at first ensue further misunderstanding, more confusion, more reproaches. Then comes the true report. From the depths of despair the camp is raised to the joy of certain victory, but alas! even Gundomad must report the loss of their leader, Vitichab. He describes in detail how the prince fell, and how his body was rescued from the enemy. Here again is a circumstantial account, proven false by the arrival of Vitichab himself (IV, i) upon the scene. The whole situation, really somewhat exciting, is made out of whole cloth. It is based upon two false reports. That is, false reports prepare the way for effect by contrast, and the real report comes with the desired force in a situation thus built up.

Perhaps one more illustration will suffice. In Bodmer's *Tarquin* the people of Rome have risen against the tyrant, after the shameful act of his son, Sextus, and Tarquin and Tullia his wife are shut up in their palace. Notice here a bit of juggling with reports to secure effect. In III, i, Tarquin informs us that Sextus is with the army, which is true to him, and that he will probably come soon with relief. Here is hope for Tarquin. Tullia follows this speech with enlightening comment upon the situation in the city. All classes are united against the tyrant and the woman who drove her chariot over her own father's body. Tarquin's hope for help from Sextus and the army is *the only hope*. Then follows (III, ii) the report of the general, Herennius, just arrived from the army as their ambassador to the Senate, for whom they have unanimously declared. That is to say, no help will come from the army. These three reports follow in quick succession and are well planned: Tarquin has one hope, the army: but this one hope is *the only hope*; and the news brought by Herennius destroys this *only hope*.

Here again the false report is used for the sake of contrast, to prepare the way for the true report.

B. SUBSTANCE OF REPORTS

For the purpose of this examination the matter of reports falls conveniently into two categories, according to its practicability or impracticability for stage presentation. To be sure, the standard of practicability has varied considerably since that time. But if the mechanical resources of the stage today are far greater, the demands made upon them have equally increased; and at a time when all actors, irrespective of the setting of the play, wore powdered wigs and high headdresses, not much in the way of absolutely faithful reproduction of originals (*Naturwahrheit*) was exacted in stage settings. If imagination could help over one such difficulty it might easily conquer other difficulties of faulty or partial staging; so that relatively it was no less possible to meet the requirements of the public in staging a given scene at that time than at present. By observing proper precaution we shall not be led far astray in judging of the practicability of the *presentation on the stage of certain action*.

1. *Matter Which Might Be Presented Directly*

A large number of reports belong to the first category. The matter reported might with perfect ease be presented on the stage. For instance: in Gebler's *Klementine* the burning of certain papers and their being snatched from the fire offers no difficulties. We might not care to witness the fainting fit of the heroine, however. In *Adelheid* the reported attack of faintness arrives so suddenly when Adelheid receives the ill-omened letter, that she falls with a crash which we hear in the adjoining room. From the point of view of the heroine there might be satisfactory reasons for reporting rather than staging just this scene. Likewise in Lessing's *Der junge Gelehrte*, two quarrel-scenes are reported, as likewise the table-scene with the various occupations of the chief characters. In almost all reports of this class there is some reason other than the difficulty of stage presentation which caused the author to report the action. These reasons will be discussed farther on.¹

2. *Matter Not Easily Capable of Direct Presentation*

Passing to the second class—those reported rather than staged because of practical difficulties of stage presentation—these reports

¹ Pp. 64 ff.

readily fall into several groups: movements of large numbers or over large spaces; actions lasting for a considerable time; action or situations suppressed from aesthetic or ethical motives; psychological processes, affecting the conceptions, the conclusions, the will of others so that the action of the persons is influenced.

The first of these groups is found to be very inclusive. Running through the list of reports in the plays examined, we find, for instance, battle-scenes reported in many tragedies; as in Gottsched's *Agis*, Krüger's *Vitichab*, Pitschel's *Darius*, Melch. Grimm's *Banise*, Brawe's *Brutus*, Weisse's *Krispus*, Bodmer's *Der vierte Heinrich*, *Kaiser*, and most of the other tragedies of their period. With Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson* and the middle-class tragedy (*bürgerliches Trauerspiel*) came reports of other events than battles. But much other material belongs to this first group: mutinies and popular uprisings; in Bodmer's *Cato*, a meeting of the Roman Senate; in others of his patriotic plays, gatherings of citizens; in Gottsched's *Cato*, the arrival of ships in port. And many other examples are to be found.

Of reports of *movements over large spaces* there are also many, of many details: in Schlegel's *Dido* the attempt to burn the ships; attempts to escape, as, for instance, from the city;¹ a forenoon's hunt.² In Schlegel's *Geschäftiger Müsziggänger*,³ Fortunat wanders through half the village making various ridiculous purchases, on his way to the house of the Minister. There are almost as many and as varied examples of action lasting over considerable time: as in Cronegk's *Der Misztrauische*, where the company has waited an hour for Timant to appear; or in many of the reports above cited, where the action is extended.

A number of scenes could be cited which for *ethical* or *aesthetic reasons* are preferably reported. One or two examples will suffice. In Gebler's *Klementine* the autopsy to determine the fact of the poisoning of the Baron takes place in the house but not on the stage. Again, the meeting of the prince with Emilia in the church is better reported than seen. In the *Kindermörderin* of Wagner, however, as early as 1776, there is an attempt in truly modern spirit to present on the stage, in all the details of reality, the evil of the society of

¹ Grimm, *Banise*.

² Ayrenhoff, *Postzug*.

³ 1741.

that day. This play was actually presented, although afterward withdrawn from the stage.¹

Other classes of matter reported, to be only mentioned here, are (1) action requiring a different scene for only a short time, therefore hardly worthy of a change of scene, even on the most "realistic" stage. The actions or situations themselves, while belonging properly to the main action, may be so brief as to be easily passed over without a shifting of scenes. Many such reports occur in the comedies of this period. Important situations are often brought to the single scene of action and elaborated. Brief actions are reported. (2) Death scenes are often described. The discussion of these classes of reports will occur later in more detail.²

It has already been indicated that the subject-matter of reports began to change under the influence of Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*. Before that time tragedies had dealt with the fate of kings and princes, men of high estate, whose personal dispositions affected the nation. With such material for subject-matter of the drama, naturally the reports deal with expressions of this power, with battles, with armies, with popular movements, with plots and councils. In the case of Weisse, whose works may be considered to indicate conservatively the dramatic tendencies of his time, we find his tragedies, including *Atreus und Thyest* (1766), making use of such subject-matter. Only in two tragedies does he choose a middle-class theme: *Die Flucht* and *Jean Calas*.

In comedy no such striking change is to be detected in the subject-matter of reports. Before as well as after the appearance of *Minna von Barnhelm*, comedy concerned itself with the lives of the middle and lower classes chiefly. The fundamental change in the aim of comedy brought with it differences in the choice of material, to be sure; but in the matter of reports not much change is noticeable, because, after all, the material was taken from the daily life of common people.

Again, important psychological processes are often more easily reported than presented on the stage. One example may suffice.

¹ Cf. *D. Lit. Denkmale*, XIII, "Vorrede z. d. Theaterstücken H. L. Wagners." This presentation was by the Wake Co. in Pressburg. Few changes were made for the stage.

² Pp. 67 ff.

Krüger in his *Vitichab* requires for his plot that Dankwart the (supposed) son of Siegmund should assassinate Vitichab, in reality his own brother. To this end he *relates* to us¹ how Tiberius in some marvelous fashion wins over Dankwart (Radogast) to the Roman cause. Now Tiberius has just mortally wounded Siegmund in single combat and has been attacked in turn by Dankwart. It was the duty as well as the passionate desire of the son to avenge the father. Yet in the heat of the conflict he allows himself to be seduced by the enemy of his country and the murderer of his father. We should prefer to see for ourselves by what persuasive powers this miracle was wrought.

C. THE PLACE OF OCCURRENCE: HOW DETERMINED

1. *Kinds of Dramatic Writing*

Having now discussed methods and technique and the subject-matter of reports, some observations may be made as to where reports occur. And it at once becomes evident that they appear most frequently and to the greatest length in tragedy, during this period.

Because the results so obtained are representative for the period we may once more take the works of Weisse by way of illustration. In twelve comedies the aggregate number of lines of report was about 172; in nine tragedies,² 680 lines; which means an average of 75 lines for each tragedy and 13 lines for each report, and only 14 lines for each comedy and 10 lines for each report. Thus the average amount of report in the tragedies is five times that of the comedies and the average length of each report is slightly greater. The number of reports in the nine tragedies is 54, in the twelve comedies only 17, or as 3:1. One of these nine tragedies contains no reports,³ while four of the twelve comedies are without report. Thus the number of individual reports is less in comedy.

If we compare the usage in *Minna von Barnhelm* with that in *Emilia Galotti*, we find a similar preponderance of report in tragedy.

There are two possible grounds for these conditions. First, in comedy, the author is more concerned with the development of dialogue in ludicrous *situations*. The action or activities of the

¹ V, i.

² This excludes *Jean Calas*, which is of entirely different character.

³ In the sense of reported action.

characters are not so much intended to be of importance in themselves as to be laughable to the spectators, and are therefore to be seen, not reported. In fact many of the early comedies are hardly more than a series of comic situations with little or no dramatic unity in the modern sense. Secondly, the subject-matter of comedy is simpler; direct presentation of the action is therefore less difficult, and the necessity of employing the "report" is reduced in consequence.

In both tragedy and comedy Weisse narrates most where he has to handle the most material in the plot. He is helpless before details of the action and in both cases resorts to narrative out of pure necessity. Thus the four comedies¹ which contain no report are all extremely simple in plot, and are of one act only. Another of one act² has only 10 lines of report, and two of three acts³ each have respectively 14 and 20 lines. Some of the five-act comedies have only a few lines, but the highest number of lines of report is found in these more pretentious plays, in one⁴ 50 lines and in another⁵ 44 lines.

The operetta (*Singspiel*) has some similarity to the comedy. The action and the plot are extremely simple. The situations are even more emphasized and the transitions even less carefully made. Thus the occasion for reporting action is reduced, and in fact the number of reports is very small, usually only one or two, the total number of lines ranging from 5 to 15. Only in *Lottchen am Hofe*⁶ (1767) there are 72 lines of narrative, distributed in three reports. In the *Aerntekranz* (1770), one of the two original with Weisse, there are two reports and 6 lines of narrative.

In the pastoral play of this period almost the same is true. The plan, not to speak of a plot, is as simple as the characters themselves, and narrative is seldom made use of.

2. *The Author's Regard for the Three Unities*

Many narratives exist only because the author has conformed strictly to the "three unities." Especially was the author helpless

¹ *Naturaliensammler, Weibergeklatsche, Groszmuth, Walder.*

² *Matrone.*

³ *Poeten; Der Misstrauische.*

⁴ *Projektmacher.*

⁵ *Freundschaft.*

⁶ This is a free translation after Mme. Favart, *Minette à la cour* (1756).

before the requirement of unity of scene. As late a writer as Gebler, in his *Klementine*, relies almost entirely upon reports for his action, as though for him there were no other technique possible. There seems to be no attempt upon the author's part to bring the action upon the stage.

But Elias Schlegel was keenly conscious of the problem of presenting the action as action upon the stage, of the injustice and the unnaturalness of the narrow requirements which bound the drama of his time. We have his forceful protest against the current construction put upon the unity of place:¹

. . . kurz, wenn die Personen nur deswegen in den angezeigten Saal oder Garten kommen, um auf die Schaubühne zu treten, . . . es würde weit besser gewesen sein, wenn der Verfasser, nach dem Gebrauche der Engländer,² die Szene aus dem Hause des einen in das Haus des anderen verlegt, und den Zuschauer seinem Helden nachgeführt hätte; als dasz er seinem Helden die Mühe macht, den Zuschauern zu gefallen, an einen Platz zu kommen, wo er nichts zu tun hat.

In practice, however, Schlegel adhered closely to the unity of place, as did the others of his time. Had Schlegel lived a few years longer,³ with his growing independence in forming his conclusions and in expressing them,⁴ and especially because of his growing cosmopolitanism, his readiness to adopt the good and reject the bad from whatever source, French, English, Italians, or Danes, he would doubtless have hastened the day of freedom from slavery to the French unities, to *Delikatesse*, and the like. As it was, Lessing was in large part responsible for the transmission of English freedom to the German drama, in its beginnings.

As for change of scene, Lessing's early comedies have strictly one scene. But the appearance of the characters in this one room is each time much better motivated than in the plays of his contemporaries, whose scenes of action are often absolutely colorless, the presence of the persons unaccounted for. In *Miss Sara Sampson* there is frequent change of scene, at the beginning of each act, and besides this III, ii, and again III, vii, back to the scene of III, i. These

¹ "Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters," *Werke*, Bd. 3. S. 295 (1747).

² As early as 1741 Schlegel had written a comparison of Shakespeare and Gryphius.

³ He died in 1749, at the age of thirty.

⁴ See Rentsch, *Schlegel als Trauerspieldichter* (Leipzig, 1890), 12 ff.

changes in Act III may have been made by means of a "middle curtain" as in I, iii, however. This "middle curtain" is used from the very first of this period, for example, in Gottsched's *Cato*. But Lessing even moves his scene to another house, Act II: "Der Schauplatz stellt das Zimmer der Marwood vor, in einem andern Gasthofe."

Cronegk says in the foreword to his *Codrus* (1758):

Die That des Codrus, nämlich sich unbekannterweise unter dem Thore umbringen zu lassen, war gar nicht auf die Bühne zu bringen, und muszte durch eine Erzählung vorgetragen werden, wenn man nicht die Einheit des Ortes beleidigen, oder, welches eben so viel wäre, einen zweiten Vorhang wollte aufziehen lassen. Einige deutsche Tragödienschreiber gebrauchen dieses Mittel mit dem Vorhange. Meine Meynung davon will ich nicht sagen: aber die Meynung d'Aubignac will ich Ihnen hersetzen, ob Sie ihn gleich so gut kennen, als ich. Er saget: "ces rideaux ne sont bons, qu'à faire des couvertures pour berner ceux, qui les ont inventés et ceux, qui les approuvent."

To use Weisse's tragedies again to indicate conservatively the progress made by the German drama toward greater freedom from unity of scene, we find that in the year 1764 he finishes two tragedies, in each of which there is a change of scene with the opening of Act V.¹ After this time he vacillates; changing the scene in Act V only in *Atreus und Thyest* (1766) and *Romeo und Julie* (1767); returning to strict unity of place in *Die Flucht* (1770), and with utter freedom of scene in *Jean Calas* (1774). This last play² shows undoubtedly the influence of *Götz*,³ and we know the Shakespearean origin of Goethe's wild joy in overriding the bounds of unity of time and place.⁴ Weisse seems to have been quite carried off his conservative footing by the popularity of *Götz*, to conclude from the difference between *Calas* and any previous play of his.

The comparative freedom of scene in Lessing's *Minna*⁵ and the complete freedom in his *Emilia* and his *Nathan* are too familiar to require mention.

In the latter part of this period careful writers, while adopting to a limited extent freedom of scenes, preferred to restrict the change to the fifth act. Even actor-dramatists like Brandes and the younger

¹ *Krispus* and *Die Befreyung von Theben*.

² Appeared in June of the previous year.

³ As well as of Lillo's *London Merchant*.

⁴ See *Rede zum Shakespearetag*, 1770.

⁵ At the beginning of each act, but only two scenes are employed.

Stephanie are conservative. Brandes in the *Medicäer* admits two changes, and in the *Gasthoff* and *Der Schein betrügt* no change. In Stephanie's *Deserteur* there is only one change, but in his *Werber* occur frequent changes. Bodmer shows Shakespearean influence by changes of scene, but always at the beginning of acts. However, from about 1770 on, the number of those plays requiring frequent change of scene increased rapidly.

Of comedy it may be said in general that progress toward freedom of scene was slower than in tragedy because the plot was simpler and there was less need for change of scene. Even Lessing's *Minna* has only two different scenes, making the change only at the beginning of acts.

The requirement of strict unity of place explains the presence of a large number of the reports in the dramas examined. Authors who are, and when they are, bound by unity of place make relatively more use of reports.

However, other elements enter in to determine the occurrence and the extent of the employment of "reports." Granting the observance of strict unity of place, the subject-matter of the drama itself may be difficult of presentation on the stage; the action may include several battles or the like. Again multiplicity of detail may cause the full direct presentation of the action to increase unduly the length of the drama. Reports considerably condense presentation. Gebler's *Adelheid* illustrates this well. *Adelheid* is a theatrical play, with perhaps half the action on the stage. But there is much detail, too much to be worked into the stage action of that time, even with the four changes of scene. Hence much is reported.

The unity of time was strictly observed throughout this period. Only occasionally was there an example of moderate freedom. Thus Bodmer's *Brutus* lasts through somewhat more than twenty-four hours. Even Lessing carefully observed this requirement, and freedom came first with the new admirers of Shakespeare and the English, of whom Goethe was one.¹

3. *The Author's Regard for "Delikatesse"*

As to why certain kinds of action are reported, the reason must be sought in what was termed "*französische Delikatesse*." According

¹ Compare *Götz* for lack of unity of time.

to French canons it was vulgar to present bloodshed or fighting or any rough or energetic action upon the stage. Death itself was usually banished from the scene, or if admitted, was carefully rehearsed to eliminate all unpleasant characteristics. Elias Schlegel,¹ while still (1741) writing as a pupil of Gottsched "von der Unähnlichkeit in der Nachahmung" says:

Der Abscheu vor der Sache, die uns vorgestellt wird, tötet öfters die Lust, die wir aus der Ähnlichkeit derselben empfinden wollen, und gebiert statt derselben in uns Widerwillen und Ekel. Sollten uns Raserei, Ohnmacht, und Tod so schrecklich abgebildet vor Augen stehen, als sie in der Tat sind; so würde öfters das Vergnügen, das uns die Nachahmung derselben gewähren sollte, in Entsetzen verkehrt werden, das Röcheln und Zücken eines Sterbenden würde die Beherztesten aus ihrem Vergnügen reizen, und die Erinnerung, dasz es nur ein Betrug sei, würde zu schwach sein, unser Gemüth, welches einmal von traurigen Empfindungen voll wäre, wieder aufzuheitern. [Diese Teile der Handlung kann man] auch nicht hinweglassen, ohne den Menschen die lebhaftesten Vorstellungen zu rauben. Es ist kein anderes Mittel übrig, als dasz wir diese Bilder den Vorbildern unähnlich machen. . . . man wird wenigstens dasjenige, was bei dem schrecklickten Augenblicke des Todes noch sanftes und süßes wahrgenommen werden kann; ganz gelinde Bewegungen, ein Hauptneigen, welches mehr einen Schläfrigen, als einen, der mit dem Tode kämpft, anzuzeigen scheint; eine Stimme, welche zwar unterbrochen wird, aber nicht röchelt, zu der Vorstellung des Todes brauchen können; kurz, man wird selber eine Art des Todes schaffen müssen, die sich jedermann wünschen mochte, und keiner erhält.

This protest of Schlegel's, and the readiness with which the French standard of delicacy, fine propriety (*Delikatesse*), was adopted by those Germans who were endeavoring to raise the standards of the German stage, can be correctly explained as a reaction, to an extreme at first, against the coarseness of the *Haupt- und Staatsaktionen* which until recently were the only German dramatic product. Germans began to realize that the usage of their neighbors was much more refined, and a first step was to adopt the foreign standards bodily.

Weisse, writing twenty years later in the *Beytrag zum deutschen Theater*, speaking of what the Germans might well learn from the French and from the English, and what they should avoid, says:

¹ Dramaturgische Schriften, Werke, III, 174; cf. *Deutsche Lit.-Denkmale des 18. Jahrhunderts*, XXVI, 102.

"Das Zügellose, Unregelmässige und oft in eine Wildheit ausartende der Engländer, und das lächerliche, galante, coquettenmässige und seichte der Franzosen vermeiden." So that Weisse still disapproved of the energy of the English stage. Bodmer, while an admirer and imitator of Shakespeare's historical plays, considered any attempt to bring battle-scenes or fighting upon the stage to be ridiculous and out of place.¹ So much from some of the dramatist-critics before and contemporary with Lessing.

It is necessary to observe to what extent these principles were carried out in the practice of dramatists of this period. In tragedy Gottsched, and his adherents generally, carefully avoided anything which might offend the most refined taste. In his *Cato*, Act V, Gottsched followed Addison closely, but Addison in his turn was an imitator of French technique. Hence Gottsched's imitation of him. Cato stabs himself behind the curtain and comes forth supported by attendants, to die after a long parting address² to son and daughter. This last scene is partly French, partly Gottsched's own, but not English. The death-scene is robbed of all unpleasantness. No fighting or roughness is permitted on the stage. Ephr. Krüger avoids death, battles, and duels. Schlegel avoids death-scenes by means of reports in *Dido*, *Die Trojanerinnen*, *Herrmann*, and *Canut*. He avoids acts of force, battles, and duels in *Orest*, as well as in all of the others named. Yet in *Orest* the king dies upon the stage, and we see Orest in his madness and the king in his rage.³ Dido retires behind the rear curtain to stab herself, but after her scream the curtain is withdrawn and we behold the end.⁴ Cronegk causes his hero, Codrus, to receive his mortal wound without the city gates, but he is carried in to play his rôle to the end and dies upon the stage as the curtain descends.

Weisse allows Richard III to enter with bloody dagger, and to strike dead the rascal Catesby before our eyes. In *Mustapha* (1761) we see at the last the band of rough janissaries in considerable numbers, the black servants of the Sultan, and murder upon the stage. In *Rosemunde* of the same year we see a double poisoning and death

¹ Seuffert, Introd. to Bodmer's *Karl von Burgund*, in *Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale d. 15. Jahrhunderts*, IX.

² Twenty-nine lines.

³ Revised for the last time in 1745.

⁴ *Deutsche Schaubühne*, V (1744). Final form.

upon the stage. Nothing is reported. In the *Befreyung von Theben* (1764) one murder is done before our eyes, wholesale slaughter is reported in the next room, and fighting without in the streets. In *Atreus* (1766) a tumult of the people is reported, but death occurs in Act V upon the stage, for here, as in *Krispus*, of the same year, the scene is changed for the express purpose of making the death upon the stage possible. Likewise in *Romeo* (1767) we see the death of Romeo and Juliet by poison and dagger at the family tomb. Here a curtain at the rear is used to secure the change of scene. In *Jean Calas* (1774) all sorts of action are both reported and seen.

In Brawe's *Brutus* the death of Brutus occurs on the stage.

In Gebler's *Adelheid*, on two occasions, a fainting fit of Adelheid is reported—in one case we hear the noise as she falls to the floor, striking a chair, as we are told later.

Moreover, II, vii, the madness of Siegmar is reported, not seen, perhaps out of consideration for the feelings of spectators. Yet in the fifth act Siegmar, in making a thrust at Dahlen of whom he is jealous, runs his own wife through with a sword and then kills himself in true "theatrical" style. Also in Gebler's *Klementine*, the taking of poison we see, but fainting and death occur elsewhere than on the stage.

Bodmer several times avoids death scenes by reporting, such as the death of Caesar in *Brutus*, and the slaughter of the banqueters in *Pelopidas*. He prefers to report fighting, as in *Italus* or *Pelopidas*. But several times he introduces considerable numbers upon the stage; in *Brutus*, V, iv, or in his *Cato* the group of women protesting against the bill to prohibit the wearing of personal adornment. And in his *Italus* he allows (III, ii) the strenuous heroine herself to stretch the false Alboin, her suitor, in the dust with his own spear when he boasts of killing her lover, Sigoveses.

In practice the theory is not always strictly adhered to, even by Schlegel himself, and as the English drama, meaning chiefly Shakespeare, became better known in Germany and Switzerland, the greater freedom in point of delicacy (*Delikatesse*) became apparent in the works of German dramatists.

It is of interest to note the almost entire absence of *ensemble*-scenes in the early plays of this period, and the substitution there-

for of narrative. The plays named above, *Mustapha*, *Brutus*, and *Cato*, are the only examples observed where considerable numbers occupy the stage at once. Bodmer may have been influenced by Shakespeare, but for Weisse the technique is surprising. On the other hand, a multitude of instances like the assassination of Caesar in *Brutus*, or the meeting of conspirators, testify to the use of reports to avoid such mass-scenes.

In comedy nice propriety (*Delikatesse*) is observed in other regards by the first writer of modern German comedy, Frau Gottsched, less than by her successors. Frau Gottsched practiced her husband's theory: "Es musz also eine Comödie . . . die gemeinsten Redensarten beybehalten."¹ For example, in her *Testament* (1743) she uses oaths and figures which would be questionable in any society, one of her feminine characters, Amalie, joining in the merriment. On the other hand she reports, for instance, the scene at the table as do Cronegk, Gellert, Ayrenhoff, and Lessing in his *Der junge Gelehrte* (III, i). Now and then such a scene is presented for certain especial purposes, as when Stephanie shows the humble peasant family at supper with their own soldier son quartered at their home. The simple long-suffering of the honest parents gains an effective background from this scene. In Stephanie's *Werber* there is repeated eating and drinking. In Brandes' *Gasthoff* there is drinking upon the stage. These of course follow Lessing's *Minna*, where there is drinking. Just enjoys the landlord's good brandy without experiencing a change of sentiment toward the donor. In IV, i, the morning meal has just been taken, the table is cleared, and coffee is served and partaken of (IV, iii).

4. *The Author's Models for Individual Plays*

Especially in the earlier part of this period German writers of dramas regularly chose several plays, or often only one play, usually French, after which the new play was constructed.² In this process, since every other detail was closely imitated, it was natural that almost the exact technique of narrative reports was also faithfully if not always well reproduced. It is useless to attempt here more than to cite a few characteristic examples.

¹ *Critische Dichtkunst*, 2. Aufl. (Leipzig, 1737), II, ii, par. 19.

² See Gottsched's *Schaubühne* for names of such writers and the models used.

Gottsched with his *Cato* represents the one extreme of close imitation. "Reports" are copied word for word with the rest from the original of Addison and Deschamps.¹ Where Gottsched inserts any composition of his own it is only to elaborate the report found in the model.² In the translation of reports the technique sometimes suffers, as when Addison says (V, i): "Hark! a second groan! Heaven help us all," which Gottsched renders (V, vii): "Allein das Poltern wird zum andern Mal gehört. Ihr Götter! Steht uns bei!" With most other writers of "original" plays published in the *Schaubühne* there was similar close imitation of the technique of reports, without the direct borrowing of language from the model. The technique is that of the French plays published in translation in the *Schaubühne* as models.³ In comedy, Frau Gottsched's technique in her three original plays⁴ is very like that in her prose translations from Des-touches.⁵

With Elias Schlegel it is difficult to speak of direct imitation of models in this detail of technique. For his first tragedies the ideas and material came from classical sources. He had studied with zeal Euripides, Sophocles and Horace, Hédelin and Boileau, Opitz and Canitz.⁶ But in addition he had mastered the principles of the *Critische Dichtkunst*. To the material of Euripides and Seneca, therefore, he applied the rules learned from Gottsched in producing his *Trojanerinnen* and his *Geschwister in Taurien*. *Dido* was written at first to oppose a regular play to the irregular *Dido* of his friend Schell, a fellow-pupil at Schul-Pforta. In his later plays, while he takes materials and ideas from many sources in a very cosmopolitan way, his formal technique in the matter of reports remains always his own interpretation of the French rules learned from Gottsched.

In his earlier tragedies especially, Weisse clings closely for his material to dramas already successful. There is evidence enough that he was familiar with Shakespeare's *Richard III* before he wrote his own tragedy of that title. Here imitation of model in the technique of reports is unquestionable. The material of the English play is

¹ Cf. Joh. Krüger in *D. Nat. Lit.*, XLII, 38.

² Cf. IV, iii.

³ E.g., Racine, *Iphigenie* (translated by Gottsched); Voltaire, *Zaire* (Joh. Joach. Schwabe) and *Alzire* (Frau Gottsched); Corneille, *Horatier* (Glaubitz) and *Cid* (Lange).

⁴ *Die ungleiche Heirat*, *Die Hausfranzösin*, *Das Testament*.

⁵ *Das Gespenst mit der Trummel*, *Der Verschwender*, *Der poetische Dorfjunker*.

⁶ Cf. Wolff, *Schlegel*, 5 f.

forced into French form. As late as 1764, when *Krispus* appeared, Weisse imitated essentially the technique of reports of his real though unacknowledged model,¹ Racine's *Phèdre* (1677). *Romeo und Julie* is another attempt to improve upon Shakespeare. It is interesting to compare the technique of reports. The action reported (III, i, v) appears upon the stage in the English plays. With Weisse, IV, i takes the place of V, i, ii with Shakespeare, but in Shakespeare we see Romeo as he receives the news of Juliet's death (V, i). The report of five lines (IV, v) does not appear in Shakespeare, but the reports in V, v (Weisse) and V, ii (Shakespeare) correspond. Thus Weisse makes more use of the report, but the reports of Shakespeare are far more effective.² It may be noted here in passing that in the first printed form of Weisse's play the speeches were much longer than in the later edition; IV, v, for instance, was twice as long.³

Direct imitation of one or a few definite models during the construction of an original play, including the technique of reported action, can be affirmed only of the first part of this period, say till 1750. It is as if the technique had to be learned by the German dramatists by working over concrete models. In the fifties and sixties frequent examples of such imitation are found, as in Weisse's *Krispus*. In general, however, the technique was by that time so well in hand that material from any source could be forced into the stereotyped form.

5. *The General Influence of Foreign Dramaturgical Ideas*

Unquestionably the dramaturgical ideas of Germany at the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century were adopted almost bodily from France. The French drama developed from the Latin; the tragedy especially from Seneca, without very great influence from the Greek.⁴ Corneille was the first important dramatist and critic to interpret Aristotle for France. When the study of Greek models came to be given the place of first importance, the conventions which had developed in France out of the Latin drama had

¹ Compare the reports in *Phèdre*, II, vi with *Krispus*, III, iii; *Phèdre*, III, iii with *Krispus*, III, vii. The reports in *Phèdre*, V, v, vi are not found in Weisse's version.

² Cf. IV, i (Weisse), V, i (Shakespeare).

³ Cf. *Beitrag zum deutschen Theater*, 5. Th. (1768); *Trauerspiele*, 4. Th. (Leipzig, 1776).

⁴ Cf. Miller, *The Tragedies of Seneca* (Chicago, 1907); Introduction by Manly, 6.

already been fixed or were taking definite form, and Corneille explained Aristotle in such manner as to support the French usage as he found it, and was making it.¹ It is of chief interest therefore to see the resemblance between the French drama even of the time of Gottsched, and the tragedies of Seneca.

Some of the characteristics of Seneca's tragedies are, to use Manly's phrasing, "love for broad description, for introspection and reflection, for elaborate monologue, and catchy sententiousness." He finds "an accumulation of horrors and a consistently unfortunate ending," "the perfection of form" only, "a formal schematism, clear because simple and lifeless." He mentions the "scanty scenery," as the "cause of long descriptive passages"; "passages of fine language, *eloquentia*"; and the "melodramatic character" of the plays.

Of these characteristics some went over to the French and some to the English, somewhat according to the temperament of the two peoples. In French tragedy we find love for description, introspection, reflection (with or without *confidants*), "a formal schematism," often "clear because simple and lifeless," "scanty scenery," "fine language." In English tragedy we find, rather than these characteristics, presentation of action of all sorts upon the stage, even "horrors"; death upon the stage in violent form; in general a much more marked tendency to melodrama. Descriptions in Shakespeare are rather short and suggestive than "broad."

Thus occurred a wide separation between the dramaturgical ideas of England and France. At the beginning of the period of this examination, the one-sided development of the French drama had nearly reached its culmination. It remained for Diderot to begin the criticism necessary to open the eyes of Frenchmen to the faults of their drama. In Germany Diderot found in Lessing one who eagerly took the best from him as he did from others and rejected what he

¹ "Il faut donc savoir quelles sont ces règles; mais notre malheur est qu'Aristote et Horace après lui en ont écrit assez obscurément pour avoir besoin d'interprètes, et que ceux qui leur en ont voulu servir jusque ici ne les ont souvent expliqués qu'en grammairiens ou en philosophes. Comme ils avoient plus d'étude et de spéculation que d'expérience du théâtre, leur lecture nous peut rendre plus doctes, mais non pas nous donner beaucoup de lumières fort sûres pour y réussir.

"Je hasarderai quelque chose sur cinquante ans de travail pour la scène, et en dirai mes pensées tout simplement. . . ."—Corneille, *Discours du poème dramatique*, 16.

found to be false. Germany proved to be better soil for the seeds of reform than did France; for the French ideas were after all exotic and superficial in Germany. French formality held far shorter sway there than had the *Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*, the wild outgrowth of the Shakespeare stage in Germany. And now the return swing of the pendulum soon became rapid toward the English idea of action on the stage, character as expressed in action, not described. The movement began definitely with Lessing's prose tragedy of burgher life, in 1755. Two years later Brawe's *Brutus* appeared, in pentameter, showing influence of English form. In 1764 appeared Weisse's *Befreyung von Theben*, showing not only in external form (pentameter), but also in many other ways, English influence. The later tragedies of Weisse are all in prose. Weisse's concession to English ideas shows how popular those ideas had become in Germany. By the second half of the sixties, in fact, the reform was assured; and by the early seventies spirits were ripe for the Shakespeare revolution that came with *Götz*. The interest of this present examination stops, however, with the attainment of freedom from the slavery to rule, and leaves the further development into violent extremes for later observation.

To resume briefly, early in this period the German tragedy inherits from the Latin through the French the technique of reported action, the requirement of nice propriety (*Delikatesse*) being added by the French. The "horrors" of Seneca are passed on to the English, while the French refinement of taste becomes so affected that not even a box o' the ear is permitted without protest, not only from the owner of the ear, but from the critic as well. Only under Lessing's influence are the two elements of the Senecan tragedy reunited.

Moreover there is characteristic of the German plays of this period directly influenced by the French a strong tendency to paint human feeling, sentiment. It was an effort to present character as opposed to action. But it seems to me to be one expression in Germany of that sentimentalism or *sensibilité* which was a watch-word of the eighteenth century in France. At first this characteristic was universal in German tragedy. The growth of English influence caused its disappearance to a large extent.

In the light of what has preceded, the relation of these changes to the technique of reporting action is apparent. Suffice it to say that the freedom gained from external forms and in the selection of subject-matter was accompanied by similar independence from requirements affecting narrative technique, such as the unity of place, *Delikatesse*, and the like; and it became the effort no longer merely to make reports formally perfect, but to make them *effective*, to make them *accomplish* something toward the action.

D. THE FUNCTION OR OCCASION OF REPORTS

1. *To Present Action*

After having thus far considered the technique and substance of reports and the place of their occurrence, let us examine as to the function of reports and the occasion for their employment.

Except where mentioned, no reports have been considered which are not necessary to the completeness of the dramatic action; but the dependence of the action upon reports varies greatly within this period. In the tragedies of Gottsched and his followers, Ephr. Krüger, Melchior Grimm, Pitschel, Camerer, and Elias Schlegel,¹ almost the entire action is reported. Cronegk depends somewhat less upon reported action. Bodmer reports almost all his action. Brawe reports some of the rising action, the falling action, and the retarding moment. Gebler, in Vienna, one of the last followers of the old "regular" school, supplies thus almost every step of the action in his *Klementine* (1771). Weisse's tragedies show much variation. In *Edward III* (1758), *Richard III* (1759), and *Befreyung von Theben* (1764), almost all the action is reported. In *Krispus* (1760-64) and *Romeo und Julie* (1767), somewhat more of the action is seen. But here in each case there is change of scene (V). In the *Flucht* (1769-70) and *Jean Calas* (1774) most of the action occurs before our eyes with change of scene. In the case of *Mustapha* (1761), *Rosemunde* (1761), and *Atreus und Thyest* (1766) there is little action and almost nothing reported. In the last-named play there is change of scene in the fifth act.

Weisse's use of the report to present action seems to depend first upon the matter chosen for the drama. If there was much

¹ Whose early works belong in this category.

action he necessarily reported much. Secondly, if he allowed himself a little more freedom from the strict unity of place, the amount of narrative was reduced. But he never won any real independence from the narrow technique he had once for all learned of Gottsched.

Lessing, in *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755), several times reports action. All the reports are in the fifth act. The administering of the poison is reported in four scenes: i, v, vii, x; the incident of the stranger who enticed away Mellefont is reported in three scenes: i, ii, iii; the departure of Marwood, in scene v; and the report that no physician could be found, in scene x. There is much here to remind one of the old technique, with elaborate reports, divisions of reports among several persons, with even a restatement of the narrative as a whole in one case.¹ But an essential difference between these reports and those of others of the same decade is, that these reports are interesting because of the fact which they communicate, and not as an elaborate account of an important action. For instance, it makes the end certain when we learn from Mellefont that no medical assistance can be found. Our interest is only for the fact. Likewise we have no desire to see the various stages of Miss Sara's fainting fit and just how the poison was administered. We are quite satisfied to hear the testimony. These are details subordinate as compared with those parts of the action which have occurred before our eyes. Lessing surrounds the framework of his action with interesting but *subordinate* reported action; his predecessors and many of his contemporaries presented the *framework* by means of narrative.

2. *To Motivate Expressions of Emotion*

Following a discussion of the use of reports to present the action of the drama, it should be observed that in most tragedies of the first half of this period the end of drama was not action. It was emotion that was portrayed. Not human beings moved to action by passion and will, but human sentiment expressed or described in what was considered to be sympathetic and beautiful language. Especially is this true of the Alexandrine plays of this time; so much so, that in support of this statement almost any one of them might justly be cited.

¹ The poisoning: the letter of Marwood recounts all the circumstances.

With this condition clearly in mind, it is no longer difficult to understand the use of reports to motivate the expression of emotion. A single report of very scant action suffices to set off long tirades, and a succession of such reports builds up a slender skeleton having the task of supporting and lending shape to a body only too often ponderously flabby. Whether consciously or not, the author aims first to express emotion. In effect he subordinates action, using it as a means to an end. Even substituting the report for presentation upon the stage, he makes action a mere source of motivation. The extent to which this process is carried varies greatly. Frequently it extends through the whole play, or only isolated speeches may be thus motivated.¹ But in this wise much of the "report" in the early part of this period is to be accounted for.

3. *To Motivate Action*

The next most important use of narrative is to motivate following action. Thus the matter of a report may or may not be itself a part of the action in the narrow sense; yet if later events would be unmotivated without the given account, the report becomes essential.

The employment of narration for the purpose of motivation occurs to a considerable extent in the tragedies of this period, especially the later ones, but is even more frequently found in the comedies. Thus in Gebler's tragedy *Adelheid* (1774), the report of armed men concealed in the woods motivates the presence of the bandit who sends the fatal letter to Adelheid. Or the reported reading of the letter by Adelheid motivates her whole succeeding action, her efforts to leave her husband, who appears now as the murderer of her former betrothed lover. In Frau Gottsched's comedy *Das Testament*, the report² of the broken carriages and the lame horses motivates the decision of Frau Tiefenborn to remain at home instead of going to the country as planned. In Weisse's *Matrone von Ephesus* (1744) he motivates the whole action by news concerning the body hanging on the gallows. In his *Poeten nach der Mode* (1751), II, ix serves to make the situation clear at once, and the following action intelligible; in like manner III, ii serves the same purpose. The same

¹ El. Schlegel, *Herrmann*.

² III, iv.

technique is found in *Der Misztrauische gegen sich selbst*, *Der Projektmacher*, and others. In Brandes' *Gasthoff* (1767) the whole action is rather sprawling and not well motivated, but the reported occurrences are parts of the action, and furnish a basis for further action. In Ayrenhoff's *Postzug*,¹ the steward (*Verwalter*) describes a table-scene, which motivates several events that take place later: the Count expresses suspicions, founded upon occurrences at the dinner, as to a love affair between his bride and the major; and the conversation with Lisette is an important scene for the action.

In Lessing's early comedies the reports motivate the action to a large extent, as for instance, in *Der junge Gelehrte*, II, iii, or III, i, the report of the table-scene. Sometimes this is done in a threadbare fashion, as in *Die alte Jungfer* (II, i) Lisette tells Lelia quite apparently so that we may know what to expect: ". . . sie hat den Augenblick nach einem Schneider, nach einem Spitzenmanne, nach einer Aufsetzerin und nach einem Poeten geschickt."

A difference is noticeable in the comedies between the nature of the earlier and the later reports in many cases. The more strict use of narrative carefully to motivate a part of the action of the play as a whole is more often found in the later comedies. In the earlier ones the reports serve as a basis for the local situation without so much relation to the unity of the action. This of course was a fault of the whole play, not of the report. The early comedies were rather a succession of situations, capable of indefinite multiplication. A report was used in two ways: first, a comparatively short account was sometimes expanded to a ridiculous situation in the mere telling, as in Joh. Chrn. Krüger's *Candidaten*.² Johann dallies with his report, cracking jokes until his master threatens his life, when he pretends to begin to relate the events "historically" in lieu of a better order of events. The result is that a short report in substance covers four pages in the telling, and if well played the situation might be quite ludicrous. Or secondly, a narrative is made to open a situation, which is then so developed as to be laughable, as in Weisse's *Misztrauischer* (II, iii), where the bold Herr Pelfer turns to his own advantage Frau Drummer's report;³ for he lets it be understood

¹ II, i.

² V, i.

³ That someone unknown has presented her daughter with a beautiful gift, suitable as a gift from an accepted suitor.

under the very eyes of the real suitor, whose proxy (*Brautwerber*) he is, that he, Pelfer, is the lover and the author of the gift in question. Thus a ludicrous, if somewhat impossible, situation is developed, based upon the report of Frau Drummer.

4. *To Relieve the Author in His Helplessness*

Very frequently the occasion for narration is the pure helplessness of the author before the difficulties of dramatic composition.

If the author is in embarrassment as to how to gather up the loose threads of his story and put an end to the "action," for example, he inserts a narrative report, which serves his purpose immediately and quickly: as in Weisse's *Edward III* (V, ii), where Nordfolk lends the author much needed assistance in hastening the end. Especially in the Alexandrine tragedies the presentation is so broad that, to get anywhere, considerable action must be condensed into reports.

The natural inclination to advance along the line of least resistance explains the tendency to *describe* action in detail, supplying motives practically at will; because the spectator has no way of controlling the author's statement without seeing the action with his own eyes. This is assuredly a comfortable method of securing the desired effect of the action without the trouble of presenting the whole action in a convincing way to the spectator. This method is especially convenient where a psychological process has to be shown.¹

Another kind of report is a manifestation of helplessness on the part of the author. The great dramatists of the world, among them Shakespeare and Schiller, when confronted with an extended action involving a mass of detail, have had the power of selecting characteristic and essential actions for careful presentation, of subordinating some minor details, and of rejecting what was unnecessary. The faculty rightly to select and reject is not the least sign of greatness in a dramatist. Among the dramas examined there are several in which the author is overwhelmed by the details and can help himself only by condensing them into reports and introducing thus *all* the circumstances of the action. By closer motivation much of the material carried along might have been dropped, and the action

¹ Cf. Krüger, *Vitichab*, V, i; see p. 62.

made clearer and simpler. Here are evidences too of the naturalism which appeared at this time and manifested itself in various ways. In the drama there was a tendency to copy life as it actually existed, to present on the stage a bit of real life. Thus Weisse's *Jean Calas* (1774) presents dramatically before our eyes the "tragic" fate of a poor French Protestant, but is no tragedy. At the same time, the author introduces with great circumstantiality all the details of the current accounts of the event, making very frequent use of the report.

Short reports are used here and there to move the persons about, like wires of the puppet show. In Frau Gottsched's *Testament* (II, vii) occurs an excellent illustration. Amalie never allows her aunt to be alone for more than a few moments at a time, in her eagerness to overhear all plans with reference to the making of the aunt's will. This has gone on before our eyes continually. Just now the author wants to introduce an important situation in which the aunt receives and accepts an offer of marriage—a most important development in the "aunt's plot" of the action. Of course this situation must not be interrupted prematurely, so the author announces a reason why Amalie does not appear as we should otherwise expect: "Nein, ich habe ihr einen Brief an meinen Kaufmann in der Stadt zu schreiben gegeben. Den kann sie in keiner Stunde fertig bekommen." Again (II, x), Dr. Hippokras has disappeared for a time and he has to report how he has busied himself: "Fr. v. Tiefenborn: 'Haben Sie etwa wieder was erfahren?' Dr. Hippokras: 'Nein. Ich habe einige von euer Gnaden kranken Hofgesinde besucht, und da fast anderthalb Stunden zugebracht.'" Other such instances occur in the same play: III, vi, III, vii.

Gellert uses reports to move his characters about, usually short reports. Thus in *Das Loos in der Lotterie* (1746; II, vii) Damon has led his sister-in-law out to the garden; similarly in III, ii, vii; V, vii. Compare also *Die kranke Frau*.¹

5. To Effect Transition or to Occupy Time

There are several minor uses made of reports which may be mentioned. A report stands occasionally at the beginning of an

¹ Written before 1747; *Lustspiele* (Leipzig, 1763).

act or of a scene to connect it with the preceding division. Thus in Gebler's *Adelheid*, III, i seems to be distinctly a "transition" report connecting Act III with Act II. Dahlen, in Act III, takes up the report begun by himself to the servant, Gotthard, in the last scene of the previous act and completes the information concerning Siegmar's attack of madness before passing to the further action of Act III.

Again, a report may be used to occupy time in order to secure the effect of verisimilitude (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*). No better illustration could be found than Act V, scene v of Gottsched's *Cato*. Porcius is commanded by his father to run down to the harbor and see if the fleeing fugitives are safe on the ships. Thence he returns, V, vii, with a report. To fill in the time while Porcius does the errand three scenes are inserted. Of these scene v is a narrative. To keep us interested Phokas entertains us with a description of the innocent sweet sleep and probable dreams of the noble man, Cato. He has just seen him lying in slumber behind the curtain at the back of the stage, which perforce represents an inner room. In addition, this report is intended to center our attention upon Cato, and arouse our sympathy for the hero just before he takes his own life. The catastrophe follows quickly after this, during the recital of Porcius.

Narrative is frequently used to substantiate as fact, as finished, what has previously been outlined, or made probable, or agreed upon before our eyes. Such reports are found both in tragedy and in comedy.¹

6. *To Reveal Character*

Reports of two other kinds should be discussed here, classified according as they are used for the purpose of characterization, or of presenting the author's philosophy in "purpose dramas."

Persons are made to report much, in the dramas examined, with the effect, and doubtless also the intention, of filling in details in our conception of this or that character of the action, making it more real, or perhaps only more pronounced as a type. There are many degrees of closeness in the connection of such reports with the action. Here only those have been considered which contribute directly to the action and to the conception of character. Strictly,

¹ E.g., Gottsched's *Cato*, II, vii; Chrn. Krüger, *Candidaten*, II, xii.

many such reports are episodes, serving as exposition rather than as action in the narrow sense. But in the period under consideration strict classification from a modern standpoint becomes impracticable, because of the different conception at that time of the nature of dramatic action.

To cite one example from many: In Bodmer's *Brutus*, IV, x, in a moment of the severest trial, as Brutus stands in Caesar's house with good reason for believing that his plot has been disclosed to the dictator, a slave comes bringing news to Brutus that his wife has fainted repeatedly. He knows the cause—anxiety for him and his undertaking. Yet he maintains a cool, self-reliant exterior; a test of strength well added.

7. *To Present the Author's Philosophy*

Of "purpose dramas" there are two kinds. The author may so choose or shape his material that (a) the actions preach his philosophy without words. The reader draws the necessary conclusions. Or (b) the characters, with more or less introduction, make active propaganda for the author's views. Bodmer, in his national dramas, sometimes uses a narrative to introduce a subject for discussion, so to speak, an occasion for patriotic harangues. Slightly different in nature is the report in *Brutus*, III, iii. In one sense the action recounted is simple: Cassius took Brutus to the meeting of conspirators and they made plans to murder Caesar. But the author intends to report and does report more than the mere outward action. He wishes to convey to us an impression of the confusion of opinion among the conspirators before the coming of Brutus and their united sentiment afterward. To this end he causes Cassius to quote indirectly the different opinions expressed. At this point he very cleverly allows us to see Brutus deceive himself before our eyes in a characteristic manner. Cassius says, ". . . in jedem Angesichte glühete der Zorn, der einen Vater, einen Sohn, eine Braut zu rächen hat"; Brutus substitutes for revenge his own higher motive: ". . . wir wollen nichts rächen, Cassius, als das Vaterland, in ihm hat Caesar jedem Römer, Vater, Sohn und Braut ermordet"; and by unconsciously imputing his own noble sentiments to others Brutus fatally deceives himself.

Here the action to be reported is not merely a deed in the author's mind, not merely the coming together in a meeting, nor even merely the conclusion reached or determined upon; just as important it is to him to report the philosophy, the steps by which the determination was reached. The transition is easy from reporting such philosophizing to further discussion, and such a transition occurs. Brutus' speech cited above, coming after two pages of narrative, introduces a whole page of philosophizing upon the deserts of a tyrant, capable though he be, at the hands of republican patriots. Brutus, whose thoughts are upon deeds, then returns to the report of plans completed at the meeting. But even with Brutus Caesar is not briefly "Caesar," but ". . . den . . . der sein Leben nach allen göttlichen und menschlichen Gesetzen verwürkt hat." No chance is lost to promulgate the republican doctrine. The report finally goes over into a continued consideration of plans, supported by a further extensive course of philosophizing.

In Gebler's *Adelheid* less preaching is done, but the facts are made to speak loudly for themselves and the moral is plain: the evil of jealousy and of too passionate love.

8. *To Add Significant Coloring to Salient Features of the Action*

Occasionally actions gain in force by being reported, not seen. A number of reports can be cited where the account takes on color of some kind from the medium of transmission. In Gebler's *Klementine* (II, xi), Friedrich, in reporting the arrival of the police officials after the death of the Baron, contrives to add to the mere report the apprehension that foul play has been done. The report has gained this touch of suspicion from the medium of transmission. Or in *Adelheid* (I, vi), Hedwig reports to her brother Siegmar the visit of a strange man during his absence, with a communication for Adelheid, Siegmar's wife. This action, if seen, might be and was simple enough. Yet heard from Hedwig's lips, jealous of Adelheid and impetuous as she was, it was a different matter. As reported by her the account was colored with insinuations calculated to fire the suspicious nature of her brother, and from merely passing through this medium the report gained in effectiveness over the plain event if seen on the stage.

III. CONCLUSION

A. CHANGES IN THEORY

To review in conclusion the results of our examination of this period, we find very little expression of theory definitely applicable to the technique of reports. Starting with the borrowed views of Gottsched and his followers, as best stated in the *Critische Dichtkunst*, we find arguments for the strict observance of the unities, of *französische Delikatesse*, for correctness of form, for the use of verse (Alexandrine) in tragedy, and of prose in comedy. Following the straight line of development, Elias Schlegel is the next to offer any important contribution to theory, with his protest¹ against slavish adherence to the unities, especially the unity of place. He urges also the advantage of verse for comedy as well as tragedy.² Lessing alone seems to have heeded the young Schlegel, by whom he must have been influenced early in his career. And Lessing, who forced a hearing for himself, not only emphasized the protest of Schlegel,³ but rebelled against the prevailing idea of *Delikatesse*,⁴ supported with arguments⁵ the middle-class tragedy which he introduced, taught the use of prose for the serious drama,⁶ required real action in place of sentiment, and among other things emphasized the necessity of making the dialogue natural.⁷

The theories of these three men were by far the most important in determining the development of the technique of reports. It is unnecessary here to mention the theoretical writings of such men as Cronegk, who protested⁸ vehemently against even the use of a curtain at the rear of the scene, or as Weisse, who, while giving out a policy of compromise between French and English dramaturgical ideas,⁹ in effect followed the old pattern almost up to the last.

B. CHANGES IN PRACTICE

In practice, however, the actual evolution can be detected in numerous details, as appears in the foregoing. In closing, a brief review of the more important evidence is added.

¹ *Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters* (1747).

² *Schreiben über die Komödie in Versen* (1740).

³ E.g., *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. 46. Stück.

⁴ E.g., *ibid.*, 56. Stück.

⁵ E.g., *ibid.*, 14. Stück.

⁶ E.g., *ibid.*, 13. Stück.

⁷ E.g., *ibid.*, 59. Stück.

⁸ Preface to *Codrus*.

⁹ *Beytrag zum deutschen Theater* (1765), Part I, Introduction.

Of considerable interest is the development of the monologue. At first it was carefully avoided to satisfy the requirements of verisimilitude (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*). As means to this end, *confidants* (*Vertraute*) were employed. With the conviction that the means were even worse than the original evil, the confidence was transferred to the audience, and now the monologue was used even to an extreme and without sufficient motivation, by authors like Brandes.

Toward the last years of Lessing's life, and through the influence of his example, the assignment of reports to certain types of characters ceased to a large extent, and it was possible for any character to be the bearer of a report properly motivated.

Not only was the pedantic use of types cast overboard; but there began with Lessing, or more properly with Elias Schlegel, a serious study of the technique of the drama hitherto unknown in Germany. Circumstances occasioned that only Lessing's thoughts should become widely influential. The changes found at this time were by no means all concretely introduced by Lessing; rather was it true that his great example stimulated emulation in others, even in this period. For we find some men such as Gemmingen, who worked well and thought with much independence.

Among other evidences of the deepening of the study of technique are the following changes in the technique of individual reports.

At the beginning of this period, the emphasis upon form extended even to the "reports." Their mechanism became very elaborate as formal technique developed, so that three different classes are distinguishable: undisguised narrative, embellished narrative, and veiled narrative. As a result of Lessing's influence and serious study the reports retain the best of this formal technique, with as little cumbersome machinery as possible; but their nature is essentially changed by the beginnings of psychological development.

In the early plays we find elaborate expansion of reports, even to great length, with labored attempts to increase the interest even to a small climax within the narrative. The element of excitement in reports is at first largely physical, later it becomes psychological. Moreover the introduction of real suspense marks a change from early methods. The conversational style is at first exceedingly circumstantial, and not until Lessing had set the example was a

rapidly moving natural dialogue attained, except occasionally. After the appearance of *Minna von Barnhelm* imitations were many. The use of minor details of technique, interruptions, and the like, Lessing essentially subtilized. There was an increase in the skilful use of "alarms" to accompany reports.

There is a remarkable development also in motivation: motivation of the choice of characters, of the use of the narrative, and of individual reports. At first external and obvious, or lacking entirely, the motivation became later skilful and usually psychological.

Psychological development in reports before the appearance of Lessing's later dramas is rather accidental than otherwise.

Aside from these narrow but not unimportant details of technique, there were broader changes affecting the "reports," tallying closely with the theories of Lessing already cited. The growing freedom from the slavish observance of the three unities and of *Delikatesse* made possible the introduction to the stage of much action hitherto reported. Matter was now excluded from direct presentation by reason of its unimportance or other impracticability, not for mere formal reasons. Thus, whereas "reports" were at first a necessity for the presentation of action, they were used later at the discretion of the author. Closely related to this also is the change in the end or object of the tragedy. After Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* especially a unified *action* was assured to the drama and not a mere dramatic presentation of emotion.

In the external form there is a gradual change from Alexandrine verse to the English measure, pentameter, and, through this intermediate step,¹ to prose. This is true for the tragedy. In the comedy, prose was used from the first by Frau Gottsched, although Alexandrines were employed occasionally by a few authors, among them Elias Schlegel. As is well known, Lessing was in large part responsible for the introduction first of pentameter, and then through his *Miss Sara Sampson*, of prose. Later, in his dramatic poem *Nathan*, Lessing returns to verse, a circumstance prophetic, as events proved, of the return of the German classic drama to a preference for verse.

Very marked is the change in style, reaching even the reports, from wordy, inflated descriptions to conversation, in both tragedy

¹ For others than Lessing, e.g., Weisse.

and comedy. Here the influence of the middle-class tragedy (*bürgerliche Tragödie*) is evident. There is less necessity for reporting action. Instead of the old descriptions of battles and the like, action difficult of reproduction upon the stage, the action now occurs naturally within four walls, perhaps. Moreover, from the nature of the case the style of language of the middle-class tragedy is simpler, homelier. In the comedy of Lessing, the dialogue is put upon a basis of sparkling intellectuality, in place of humdrum circumstantiality—in reports as elsewhere.

In conclusion, it may be said that the development of the technique of reports in the German drama of this period is away from that of the French drama. Beginning with complete adoption of French technique in this detail, as in others, as early as 1747 Elias Schlegel began to protest. To be sure, he had read La Motte's criticism as well as English dramas; just as Lessing had read Diderot. But in both cases the honor of the French prophet was least at home. The French were less ready than the Germans for reform, as Lessing says, because the drama, as it was, was a product of their own, and dear to them, while in Germany it was a foreign growth, more readily displaced by something better. Certain it is that with the appearance of *Miss Sara Sampson* in 1755 a period began in which the Germans led the French in the reform of dramatic technique.

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